



Date: April 25, 2003
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BLM HOSTS HORSETHIEF TOUR, PUBLIC MEETING

The BLM Billings Field Office invites the public to a tour of the proposed Horsethief Hazard Fuels Reduction Project area and a public meeting in Roundup to discuss proposed alternatives for fuels treatments. Both the tour and meeting will be held May 8, 2003. The tour will begin at 3 p.m. and the meeting at 7 p.m.

Those wishing to attend the tour should meet at the St. Benedict's Catholic Church parking lot at 2:45 p.m. The church is in the 500 block of Main Street in Roundup. The BLM will not furnish transportation. A high-clearance or four-wheel drive vehicle is recommended. The tour should last about two hours. The 7 p.m. meeting will be held at the Roundup Community Center in the 700 block of 3rd Street West. The tour may be cancelled in the event of rain or snow.

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The Horsethief Hazard Fuels Reduction Project area is just west of Roundup in the wildland-urban interface. The purpose of the proposal is to change fire behavior to protect the town of Roundup, structures in the Horsethief subdivision, and natural resources. BLM-administered lands contain overstocked stands of ponderosa pine that are very receptive to ignition. The agency proposes to reduce natural hazard fuels on BLM-administered lands in the 10,300-acre project area using mechanical methods and prescribed fire. Proposed alternatives for treatment will be analyzed in an environmental assessment.

The Horsethief project was selected by Secretary of the Interior Norton as a pilot project for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) streamlining under President Bush's Healthy Forests Initiative. One of the goals of the initiative is to improve regulatory processes to ensure more timely decisions, greater efficiency, and better results in reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfires by restoring forest and rangeland health.

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